



COMDTINST 1750.4C

APR 29 1999

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 1750.4C

Sub: OMBUDSMAN

- Ref:
- (a) Ombudsman Handbook, COMDTPUB P1750.13 (series)
  - (b) CG Postal Manual, COMDTINST M5110.1 (series)
  - (c) Invitational Travel, COMDTINST 12570.3 (series)
  - (d) Family Advocacy Program, COMDTINST 1750.7 (series)

1. PURPOSE. This Instruction provides policy and program guidance applicable to all Coast Guard units for the Ombudsman Program.
2. ACTION. Area and district commanders, commanders of maintenance and logistics commands, commanding officers of headquarters units, assistant commandants for directorates, Chief Counsel, and special staff offices at Headquarters shall ensure compliance with this directive.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. COMDTINST 1750.4B is canceled.
4. DESIGNATIONS.
  - a. Commandant will appoint in writing an Ombudsman-at-Large to represent all unit ombudsmen and report on active duty and Reserve family concerns. The Ombudsman-at-Large shall write reports of any field visit and provide them to the Commandant.
  - b. Work-Life Supervisors at Integrated Support Commands (ISC's) and Headquarters Support Command (HSC) shall be the Ombudsman Coordinator. The Work-Life Supervisor may delegate this responsibility in writing to a volunteer or Work-Life Staff specialist. The Ombudsman Coordinator trains, informs, and supports ombudsmen within the ISC/HSC area of responsibility.

- c. Commanding officers shall appoint an Ombudsman. Officers-in-Charge (OINC) shall either appoint one or ensure family members have access to one appointed for the geographic area. If possible, appoint someone other than commanding officers', officers'-in-charge, executive officers', or executive petty officers' spouses as Ombudsman. Contact the Ombudsman Coordinator, Chaplain, or Command Master Chief for assistance in selecting an Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is a volunteer. A spouse, Reservist, or Auxiliarist may serve as Ombudsman.
5. **SELECTION CRITERIA FOR OMBUDSMEN.** In selecting an Ombudsman the command shall seek a person who has most, if not all, of these traits.
- a. Views life in general and the Coast Guard in particular positively;
  - b. Understands and supports command policies;
  - c. Can articulate family members' concerns and serve as their advocate;
  - d. Is familiar with Coast Guard missions, organizations, and traditions;
  - e. Works effectively with the command and active duty and Reserve officers' and enlisted members' families;
  - f. Has the time to fulfill the responsibilities;
  - g. Can distinguish between issues suitable for public discussion and those requiring confidentiality; discreet;
  - h. Has no record of family violence; and
  - i. Can impartially direct persons with family concerns to appropriate resources.
6. **APPOINTMENT PROCESS.** Commanding officers and those officers-in-charge who appoint an Ombudsman shall:
- a. In soliciting volunteers for Ombudsman positions pursuant to Paragraph 4.c.:
    - (1) Request a brief resume from all candidates. Enclosure (1) provides guidance.
    - (2) Interview candidates to determine the best-qualified person. Enclosure (2) contains sample questions.
    - (3) Appoint an Ombudsman in writing, outlining

responsibilities, the appointment's anticipated duration, and available administrative and financial support. Enclosure (3) contains a sample appointment letter.

- (4) Send a copy of the appointment letter to the Ombudsman Coordinator at the servicing ISC/HSC.
  - (5) If an Ombudsman is to serve more than one command, each command's commanding officer or officer-in-charge shall sign the appointment letter.
- b. Assure the command and Ombudsman clearly agree on responsibilities, especially those requiring financial expenditures. Ombudsmen should not incur personal expenses in performing these duties.
  - c. Include the Ombudsman position on unit organizational charts. The Ombudsman reports directly to the commanding officer or officer-in-charge of the appointing command.
  - d. Submit a completed Standard Form 52 to the servicing Command Staff Advisor to cover the Ombudsman under Workers Compensation and the Tort Claims Act while acting officially.
  - e. Notify the Ombudsman Coordinator of an Ombudsman's appointment or relief. Give the Ombudsman Coordinator copies of Enclosures (3), (4), and/or (5) as appropriate. The Ombudsman Coordinator will arrange training for newly appointed ombudsmen.
  - f. To preserve the program's integrity, relieve the Ombudsman if he or she no longer meets Paragraph 5 criteria. Enclosure (4) is a sample release letter.
7. UNIT SUPPORT. Consistent with local needs, commanding officers and those officers-in-charge who appoint an Ombudsman shall supply that person and the Ombudsman Coordinator, if a volunteer, with available unit resources from both appropriated and non-appropriated funds (Morale, Well-Being, and Recreation). Commands shall:
- a. Give the Ombudsman a copy of this Commandant Instruction, reference (a), and relevant publications, such as Coast Guard, Hi-Line, and The Reservist. Obtain reference (a) by faxing a request to the DOT Distribution Center at (301) 386-5394.
  - b. Give the Ombudsman a list of unit personnel, family members' names, addresses, and telephone numbers. Under Privacy Act guidelines, ombudsmen are designated as "routine users," which grants them access to members'

home addresses and phone numbers for the purpose of providing Work-Life information.

- c. Provide the Ombudsman with a Coast Guard name tag that includes the unit's name and an Ombudsman's pin available from the Work-Life staff.
- d. Ensure the Ombudsman has a telephone answering machine. Buy one if needed for his or her use with appropriated funds and document the property loan on DD 1149. Ombudsmen must use items purchased from appropriated funds to carry out official duties; such items remain Coast Guard property. See Paragraph See 7.f.(3) below.
- e. Permit the Ombudsman to ride as a passenger in Government vehicles.
- f. Authorize appropriated funds for this additional support:
  - (1) Mailing materials to members' homes on the Ombudsman's behalf, including metered mail as described in reference (b).
  - (2) Using administrative equipment, paper, and office supplies as needed, including a typewriter, computer, copy machine, fax machine, telephone with long distance access, government-issued telephone credit card, and letterhead stationery to communicate with families and community resource agencies.
  - (3) Procuring ordinary work-related items such as briefcases, portfolios, and carrying files as Coast Guard property for the Ombudsman's use; he or she must return them to the command on relinquishing duties.
  - (4) Invitational travel orders for conducting Ombudsman duties; reference (c) applies.
- g. Reimburse the Ombudsman from either appropriated or non- appropriated funds for these incidental expenses incurred while carrying out official responsibilities:
  - (1) Child Care. Reimbursement may not exceed local child development centers' rates.
  - (2) Mileage. Reimburse at the government privately owned vehicle (POV) rate. The Ombudsman must document mileage in a log or journal to claim reimbursement.
  - (3) Parking and Tolls. Reimburse parking and tolls on presentation of receipts.

(4) Telephone Calls. Options include:

- (a) Authorizing FTS 2000 Network telephone use in the unit office, which is preferable if travel from the Ombudsman's residence to an FTS 2000 Network telephone is within a reasonable distance. A log shall be maintained of calls made including person called, purpose, date and time. This shall be presented monthly for review and verification;
  - (b) Purchasing with command funds a telephone credit card in the Ombudsman's name for official calls. Calls shall be documented in the telephone log that include the person called, purpose, date and time. This shall be submitted to the command monthly for review and verification. Use of Federal calling cards (FTS cards) is no longer authorized for use by Ombudsmen.
  - (c) A command may reimburse toll calls on presentation of a telephone company bill. The Ombudsman shall keep a telephone log of all toll calls, including the persons called, purpose, time, and date of such calls. This log shall be submitted for reimbursement; or
  - (d) If a command's members' residences are disbursed over a wide geographic area, causing numerous toll calls, the command may obtain and fund a toll-free (800, 888, or other) number so the commanding officer, officer-in-charge, and families can leave messages during a deployment or for the Ombudsman.
- h. Recognize the Ombudsman's service through appropriate awards and other forms of recognition, e.g., write a Letter of Appreciation, nominate the Ombudsman for a national volunteer award, or give a Certificate of Performance or other Public Service Award. Observe Coast Guard Ombudsman Appreciation Day, the last Friday in March, with special recognition for the Ombudsman. Commands preferring to give their Ombudsman a token of appreciation should refer to Paragraph 7.f.(3) above.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES.

- a. The Ombudsman Coordinator shall:
  - (1) Serve as the point of contact for unit ombudsmen within the area of responsibility, including providing support, advice, information, and referral;

- (2) Maintain current ombudsmen's appointment letter file;
  - (3) Maintain each Ombudsman's current address, phone and fax numbers, and E-mail address; see enclosure (5);
  - (4) Identify appropriate training opportunities and arrange all new ombudsmen's initial training; and
  - (5) Annually by 30 October send a current list of all ombudsmen in the AOR to Commandant (G-WKW-2).
- b. The Ombudsman shall:
- (1) Report directly to the commanding officer or OINC;
  - (2) Through periodic meetings, mailings, and articles in command publications, inform family members on the command's behalf;
  - (3) Meet with the command regularly to obtain information on concerns common to unit families;
  - (4) Refer families to appropriate sources of assistance in resolving family-related questions. The Ombudsman's role is not to solve other people's problems but to link them to resources that will provide the needed assistance.
  - (5) Confidentiality is important in building trust between the command and its families, who must regard ombudsmen as a reliable source of information and trustworthy source of help in an emergency;
  - (6) Support the Work-Life staff's family-oriented initiatives;
  - (7) Maintain and keep current local resource files and turn over to a successor;
  - (8) If needed, maintain a telephone tree to quickly communicate with families;
  - (9) Immediately report suspected or substantiated cases of family violence and any pertinent information to the commanding officer or officer-in-charge and Family Program Administrator (FPA) as described in reference (b). If unable to reach any of these persons contact the Work-Life Supervisor. The Ombudsman shall neither offer counsel nor investigate further. The Work-Life Family Program Administrator is a professional who case-manages incidents of family violence and informs the command.

The Ombudsman has no further role in the case and should not expect or receive any feedback because of confidentiality issues. The Ombudsman shall inform family members of the requirement to report family violence;

- (10) Secure written records of incoming and outgoing telephone calls and requests for resources pertaining to Ombudsman duties where others cannot read them; and
  - (11) Keep expense logs and receipts for reimbursement. Submit copies of all telephone logs to the command for review and verification.
9. Reporting Requirements. Annually on 30 September all commands having an Ombudsman shall validate information contained in enclosure (5) and provide updated information to the Ombudsman Coordinator. The command shall retain signed copies of enclosure (5).

JOYCE M. JOHNSON  
Director of Health and Safety

- Encl: (1) Sample Application for Ombudsmen  
(2) Sample Questions for Interviewing Ombudsman Candidates  
(3) Appointment Letter  
(4) Termination Letter  
(5) Release of Information  
(6) Best Practices for Unit Ombudsman Program

## SAMPLE APPLICATION FOR OMBUDSMEN

Persons interested in serving the command as the Ombudsman should apply in writing requesting consideration for the position.

1. A formal application such as Optional Form 612 may be used.
2. A brief one-page resume relating skills and experiences to the responsibilities of the position may be submitted. The following format is helpful in preparing a resume..

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE NUMBER

OBJECTIVE - IMMEDIATE To become ombudsman

LONG-RANGE To become employed in a helping field

EDUCATION - School attended

Subjects studies

Any degrees received

OTHER TRAINING - Kind, length, year of workshops, seminars, or training attended

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY - Position, company, responsibilities

EXPERIENCE - Relevant volunteer work or life experiences (including those as CG spouse).

Include duties, achievements, skills acquired

HONORS/MEMBERSHIPS - Any awards received, memberships in organizations, offices held

REFERENCES - People who know you well or past employers who would be able to write of you character and/or work performance

3. A letter may be submitted explaining why the person wants the job.



**SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWING OMBUDSMAN CANDIDATES**

1. The command shall give a copy of COMDTINST 1750.4C to any applicant not already familiar with the program.
2. In selecting an ombudsman for your command you will want to focus on experiences and attitudes that will help the applicant do an effective job for you. These questions will help in evaluating applicants.
  - a. Why do you want to serve as ombudsman at this command? Does your family support your desire to do so?
  - b. Tell me about your experiences helping others locate resources as a volunteer, employee, neighbor, or friend.
  - c. When you move, how do you locate new resources? How would you start locating resources for families here?
  - d. What does it mean to be an active listener? When have you been called on to be one?
  - e. [For persons who have been an Ombudsman before:] What kind of experience was it? What was the most positive thing(s) that happened? What was most disappointing?
  - f. What are the best and worst things about being a part of the Coast Guard?
3. Present these scenarios to each applicant and ask each how they think they would respond.
  - a. Ms. Smith says she has a doctor's appointment next Wednesday afternoon and needs you to get a babysitter for her children. How do you respond?
  - b. A spouse calls indicating the active duty member is away for an extended period, he has no money, bills are due, the food supply is running low. What kind of resources can you direct him to?
4. These are suggested questions for you, the command, to answer yourself about the applicants:
  - a. Does the person have a positive outlook about things, the Coast Guard in particular?
  - b. Is the person able to communicate ideas clearly?

**Enclosure (2) to COMDTINST 1750.4C**

- c. After speaking with references, does it seem the person respects others' confidentiality?
- d. Does the person have the time and energy to devote to the job or the person already spread very thin?
- e. Does the applicant seem mature, patient, flexible, and stable?
- f. Have this applicant's experiences helped him or her to understand family needs?
- g. Does he or she know how to obtain resources within the community for families?
- h. Will this applicant have his or her family's support?
- i. Can you work well with this applicant?
- j. Is this applicant seen as a good role model?
- k. Is this applicant interested in becoming an ombudsman for the "right" reasons?

Mrs. Josephine Coast Guard  
1111 Main St., N.W.  
Anywhere, US 12345

Dear Mrs. Coast Guard:

I take great pleasure in appointing you as Ombudsman for Group/Station Anywhere, My Town, State. The function of the Ombudsman is to serve as a link between the command and the unit's families, to assist the command, and to refer individuals with problems to the proper resources. The Ombudsman will also forward ideas from the families to the appropriate office. For those seeking guidance about particular problems, the Ombudsman attempts to find the best resources possible to assist the individual or the family.

All information provided to you as Ombudsman will remain confidential. However, you are required to report to me any information involving military personnel dealing with child abuse, spouse abuse, and drug and alcohol abuse. In addition, child and spouse abuse must be reported to the Family Program Administrator at the Work-Life Staff serving this geographic area, and drug and alcohol abuse must be reported to the Command Drug and Alcohol Representative.

As, Ombudsman, you will be an official member of my staff. You have direct access to me and/or my Executive Officer in the performance of your duties.

The Family Program Administrator for this Command is Ms. Mary Smith. She may be reached at (201) 123-4567. The Ombudsman Coordinator at the ISC Work-Life Staff is Mr. John Brown who will provide policy and guidance on the role and duties of the Ombudsman. In addition, we will request training for you as it becomes available.

Your services are considered free and donated; however, you will be entitled to reimbursement for child care, telephone toll calls and local travel in the performance of your duties as Ombudsman and for travel completed under Invitational Travel Orders. You are also protected under Federal Law for liability and work related injury when you are serving as a volunteer within the scope of your duties as define in the policy provided in COMDTINST **1750.4C**.

You are authorized use of office space, office supplies and equipment, and metered mail to conduct business directly related to your duties as Ombudsman.

The need to improve the quality of life in the Coast Guard has never been greater. I welcome you as the Ombudsman for this command and look forward to working

**Enclosure (3) to COMDTINST 1750.4C**

with you. Your initial appointment is for six months (six months, or 1 year or other appropriate period of time selected by the command with the option of both parties to renew or not). At the end of this initial appointment we will discuss an appointment that will remain in effect unless terminated sooner by your resignation or by this command's action.

I thank you for your willingness to devote your time and talent to serve in this position.

Sincerely,

L.S. GOOD  
Captain, U.S. Coast  
Guard Commanding Officer

Copy: Ombudsman Coordinator

Mrs. Josephine Coast Guard  
1111 Main St., N.W.  
Anywhere, US 12345

Dear Mrs. Coast Guard:

I thank you for your \_\_\_\_ years and \_\_\_\_ months of service to this command as Ombudsman. I have appreciated your creative ideas for keeping families informed of local resources and events.

However, as we discussed last week, your breech of confidentiality has made it difficult for you to continue to work effectively with command families. Effective this date you are relieved of your duties.

Sincerely,

L.S. GOOD  
Captain, U.S. Coast  
Guard Commanding Officer

Blind Copy: Ombudsman Coordinator

**Enclosure (5) to COMDTINST 1750.4C**

I authorize the Coast Guard to collect and maintain my address, telephone number, E-mail address, and FAX number for the purpose of creating and maintaining an Ombudsman communications network.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
United States Coast Guard

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail (if available)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fax (if available)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## BEST PRACTICES FOR UNIT OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

These are best practices for a quality unit Ombudsman Program.

1. Widely publicize the ombudsman's duties within the command.
2. Officially introduce the ombudsman at an "All Hands" or family meeting.
3. Present the appointment letter at a group function.
4. Introduce the ombudsman to arriving members by a letter in their Welcome Aboard packets and make him or her an integral part of the sponsor program.
5. Provide office space if available for communicating with members. Advertise the location and hours in the Plan of the Day or pass the information at muster.
6. Set a designated time, monthly when possible, for the ombudsman to meet with the commanding officer, officer-in-charge, executive officer, or executive petty officer to discuss routine matters.
7. Appoint the ombudsman to command advisory boards such as Patient Advisory; Morale Committee; Partners in Education (PIE); or others as appropriate.
8. Introduce the ombudsman to Coast Guard and community officials who provide family support services.
9. If appropriate invite the ombudsman to participate in unit training to better understand policies.
10. Recognize service through appropriate awards system and other forms of recognition, e.g., write a Letter of Appreciation, nominate the ombudsman for a national volunteer award, or give a Certificate of Performance or other Public Service award. Observe Coast Guard Ombudsman Appreciation Day on the last Friday of March by specially acknowledging the value the Ombudsman has contributed to supporting the mission by assisting the families. Do not use appropriated funds to buy gifts as a token of appreciation.
11. Contact the Ombudsman Coordinator at the servicing ISC/HSC for guidance and assistance.